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March 30, 1981

POLAND: Signs of Soviet Military Activity

[REDACTED]

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Hardliners Hold On

The failure of party moderates yesterday to oust conservatives from the leadership may bode ill for today's talks between Walesa and Deputy Prime Minister Rakowski that are aimed at avoiding a general strike due to begin tomorrow. [REDACTED]

Party conservatives were forcefully criticized for their opposition to reform at the long and stormy meeting. According to Warsaw radio, three Politburo members, including Stefan Olszowski, tendered resignations, which subsequently were turned down. Given an opportunity to speak, the three lashed out harshly at Solidarity. [REDACTED]

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The hardliners' ability to retain their seats on the Politburo reflects the essential conservatism of the Central Committee. Soviet pressure may have convinced many that the removal of hardliners--especially in the face of a Solidarity strike threat and in response to spontaneous pressure from below--would have signaled Moscow that accommodation had gained the day. The liberals may also have overplayed their hand by taking their criticism into the open and thereby exposing themselves to charges of factionalism. [REDACTED]

The hardliners' victory may prove to be pyrrhic. Their public exposure as hardliners and the view of many that they were retained merely to placate Moscow may limit their political clout in the longer term. [REDACTED]

Today's talks between Rakowski and Walesa should reveal whether the hardliners get their way on key policy issues--most importantly on the incident at Bydgoszcz. The Politburo report delivered at yesterday's session was more conciliatory on this issue than the leadership's earlier statement, suggesting that the hardliners may have backed off. [REDACTED]

Solidarity's disappointment that no hardliners were removed may prompt it to press even more firmly its full demands. Both Rakowski and Walesa had appeared somewhat hopeful that progress was being made before the plenum, although this may have been meant more to influence yesterday's party meeting than to describe an actual narrowing of positions. [REDACTED]

If the talks fail, Solidarity seems committed to proceed with its general strike. The Politburo report took a particularly tough stance on this point, saying that a strike under current conditions would represent an open political struggle against the party and socialism and would put Poland's *raison d'etat* to its ultimate test. Such language could be used to justify the imposition of martial law. [REDACTED]

The moderates' failure seems certain to alienate further many local party organizations, despite the Politburo's efforts yesterday to respond to local demands

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for internal party reform. The Politburo report endorsed selection of party officials by secret ballot, an unlimited number of candidates for the offices, and a limitation on the terms of office. It also came close to favoring an early convocation of the party congress, something the Soviets have opposed. [REDACTED]

Soviet Comment

Soviet rhetoric on Poland over the weekend reached fever pitch, while initial TASS comment this morning on the Polish plenum noted it "adopted appropriate decisions on the questions discussed." [REDACTED]

Moscow attempted to bolster the hand of the hardliners in the Polish leadership going into the plenum by issuing media articles describing the situation in anarchic terms. The coverage implied that the Polish Government was losing the ability to maintain control. [REDACTED]

A TASS dispatch from Warsaw yesterday stated that Solidarity "is going over to open methods of struggle" against the party and the government. It cited "instructions" from Solidarity's Gdansk chapter calling--in the event of a general strike--for the seizure of all industries, communication facilities, and transportation. [REDACTED]

TASS claimed, in fact, that Solidarity had already temporarily taken over a television transmitter in Warsaw and blocked a major highway in southeastern Poland. These allegations were publicly refuted by Polish television and by Solidarity. [REDACTED]

The Soviets yesterday also made their most direct and hard-hitting criticism of the US position on Poland by rebuking President Reagan for his comments on the Polish situation in an interview published yesterday. Labeling those comments "undisguised and gross interference in the internal affairs of Poland," TASS accused him of instigating forces "which are in opposition to the Polish Government." [REDACTED]

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More Soviet officials late last week conveyed messages to Western governments that Moscow views the situation in Poland as precarious and that it has the right to intervene if need be. The Soviet Ambassador to Italy told a high-ranking Italian Foreign Ministry official on Friday that Moscow's hopes that the Poles could handle their problems themselves had greatly diminished and that the Soviets saw a collapse of authority in Poland. The Ambassador expressed the "hope" that Soviet intervention could still be avoided but emphasized Moscow's vital military, political, and economic equities in Poland. [REDACTED]

Soviet Central Committee member Arbatov told [REDACTED] on Thursday that the Soviets would not shrink from intervening by noting that Poland "is almost as important to us as West Germany is to you."

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